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VALUES FOR A HIGH QUALITY SUSTAINABLE WORLD

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"WE CAN NOW LOOK TO SCIENCE TO SAVE THE WORLD, NOT WITH NEW ENERGY SOURCES, GREEN REVOLUTIONS, AND SUCH LIKE (WHICH ONLY STAVE OFF AND THEREBY FURTHER MAGNIFY THE EVENTUAL DOWNFALL) BUT INSTEAD BY PROVIDING MORE REALISTIC AND SUSTAINABLE VALUE-BELIEF GUIDELINES TO LIVE AND GOVERN BY."

Science would seem the last place to look for new values. The fundamental incompatibility of science and values, long recognized in the commonly-called **science-values "dichotomy"**, or **"antithesis"**, is evidenced also in the **"two cultures" clash** of C.P. Snow wherein the type of reality upheld by science stands in direct irreconcilable conflict with more traditional views upheld in the humanities, fine arts, religion and other disciplines. Science, depicting a strictly physical, indifferent, mass-energy, value-empty cosmos, and seemingly lacking in any purpose, freewill, moral choice, or any higher meaning, has from the start, rejected and destroyed values.

This **divisive crisis of ultimate belief** afflicting our modern **"age of science"** is today a thing of the past, resolved now in the cognitive(consciousness) revolution of the 1970s. Science, discovering its error and changing its mind, has now reversed its centuries-old ban on consciousness. The new outlook of science now affirms human values as the most strategically powerful force governing the course of global change. Thus revolutionized science now qualifies as the best foundation for ultimate belief. The term **"scientism"(science as religion)** takes on an entirely new meaning offering now a unifying solution, a universal common core of ultimate belief and moral outlook in a world long divided.

SCIENCE, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND SURVIVAL: Despite the marvels and apparent successes of modern technology, the gains achieved are soon offset by expanding demands of growing human numbers. Almost anything that enables more people to fare better -- a new energy source, an aqueduct, another mass transit system, or any technological fix --, in a context of rising population pressures, inevitably, has the long-term result of a further escalation of our world problems. This **"vicious spiral paradox"** means that (without population stabilization) many

seemingly desirable innovations with obvious short-term benefits, only serve in the long run to put us deeper and deeper into a no-win situation. Slowly but surely, we become ever more deeply enmeshed in a vicious spiral of mounting population, pollution, energy demands, environmental devastation and human degradation with urban overcrowding and associated crime, homelessness, and hopelessness. With one thing reinforcing another, we become more and more firmly entrapped year by year.

What is needed to break this vicious spiral is a radical revision worldwide in human life-styles, aims, and attitudes, with a more long-term redirection of social priorities and policies that preserve the rights of future generations. A global mind change is called for with a major reconception of human values goals, and life meaning. In short, as Einstein put it in reference to atomic power, "If humankind is to survive, we need a new way of thinking."

Such a new way of thinking, spawned by the 1970's cognitive(consciousness) revolution in science now affirms that the world we live in is driven not solely by mindless physical forces but, more crucially, by human values. The human-value hierarchy becomes the most powerful force shaping events in today's world, the strategic key to world change, current global ills, and their cure (Sperry, 1972, 1991). The "battle to save the planet" becomes in large measure, a battle over values.

The reason conventional values are not working today, are driving our entire ecosystem toward collapse is because the starting assumptions are wrong for modern times. Moral values are not absolute; not immutably prefixed by natural law or divine ordination. Human values by nature are evolutionary, interrelated, and conditional on the context in which they evolve (Pugh, 1977). To cling to unchanging "absolute" values in a rapidly changing world can be fatal. For centuries it has been the starting assumption that because human life is special and sacred, the more people the better. "Go forth and multiply and take dominion..." was morally good when the scriptures were first written. Two thousand years later, however, with the global situation reversed, with an exploding world population and its multiform side effects threatening to destroy everything we value, it follows that because human life is precious, even sacred, "**Less is better. Retract and multiply less**" becomes today's prime spiritual imperative.

The result overturns an entire complex of long-revered, humanitarian presuppositions and centuries-old traditions. What used to be the world's most beneficent force, may act as today's greatest evil. New moral convictions are called for that can override long-cherished national, ethnic, religious and cultural value systems of the past. This includes esteemed 'humanitarian' traits deeply inherent in human nature itself, but evolved ages ago without regard for the projected effects in today's kind of world. A more far-sighted and transcendent vision is required for what it means to be compassionate, tolerant, just, and humane.

. . . . . Twenty-five years ago we could still see a choice: either adopt the new values by foresight or have them forced by a rising sea of intolerabilities. Mounting human demands for subsistence in a direly depleted ecosphere are not the sole concern. In numerous subtle and unsubtle ways overpopulation tends to desensitize society and demean the worth of the human person as increasingly expendable. Just as rarity and beauty commonly blend, our sense of the specialness of human life, its singular meaning, wonder, and dignity all undergo an insidious, unobtrusive, but

inexorable erosion to which our inherent human nature is particularly vulnerable. The process is so slow and the habituation capacity of the human brain so great that the adverse trends, spread over decades or even generations, tend to go unnoticed until it is too late.

Instead of our conventional social evasion of sensitive population issues, we need open forthright study and debate toward informed views of what optimal population levels might be, regionally and globally, and especially what **ideals to strive for in an overall guiding plan for existence on planet Earth.** I once defined Utopia as tomorrow's technology combined with, and adapted to population levels of centuries past. We urgently need bright new utopian goals we can at least aim for, instead of drifting further with outdated guidelines of a distant past.

The more rarity, diversity, and contrast in our lives and world we live in, the greater the value and meaning. Metropolitan versus wilderness values, for example, each gain by contrast through presence of the other. A world designed solely to equalize, homogenize, and maximize the "human carrying capacity" automatically degrades the value and meaning of human life. We all tend to adjust to our own personal **"baseline of happiness"**, below which life seems depressing, and above which, rosy. Our personal baselines do not need to be all identical and equalized. The proven benefits of biodiversity do not stop at the human social order.

Hard decisions ahead to not have additional much-desired children, to forego lucrative development and industrial profits, or abandon cherished livelihoods, and the like, might all come much more readily if these decisions were additionally reinforced by strong moral-religious restraints backed by a pervasive public moral sense with threats of social ostracism. The battle to save the biosphere thus comes down to a rapid conversion of all humankind to a changed sense of the highest good and what is most sacred. Science, now revolutionized, offers such a new transcendent, but realistic sense of ultimate value based in the emperically verifiable and proven credibility of science.

Based on excerpts from Sperry, R. W. (1993). ***The impact and promise of the cognitive revolution.*** *American Psychologist, 48(8), 878-885, and Sperry, R. W. (1991)* ***Search for beliefs to live by consistent with science.*** *Zygon 26, 237-258.*